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House Passes Government Telework Legislation
Cost-savings bill increases competitiveness, efficiency in the Federal workforce

WASHINGTON – The House of Representatives today passed the "Telework Improvements Act of 2010," legislation that will help ensure continuity of government services during emergencies, bolster productivity, and allow the Federal government to compete with the private sector by allowing employees to telework. H.R. 1722, which passed the House by a vote of 290 to 131, builds on the government's current telework capabilities and requires each Federal agency to establish a policy to authorize employees to telework.

The Telework Improvements Act was reported out of the Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia Subcommittee on March 24, 2010 and forwarded favorably by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform by voice vote on April 14, 2010 .

During the record-breaking snowstorm earlier this year, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) estimated that the Federal government saved approximately $30 million in productivity each day the government was closed because of the number of employees who were teleworking. H.R. 1722 will build on this success and result in additional cost savings for the Federal government while reducing energy consumption and traffic congestion.

"I am pleased to support this bipartisan legislation that will save taxpayers money, promote work flexibility for Federal employees, and help the government attract top talent from around the country," said Chairman Edolphus "Ed" Towns (D-NY). "Providing employees with the ability to telework will help prevent loss of productivity in the Federal government during periods of severe and hazardous weather and improve preparedness in the event of an emergency."

H.R. 1722, sponsored by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA), and Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) requires the head of each agency to establish a plan that authorizes employees to telework and must designate or assign a Telework Managing Officer for the agency. The bill also directs the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to issue regulations and guidance to other agencies and requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to evaluate and report on each agency's telework

program.

"I believe this legislation is necessary so that a formal telework policy can be enacted across the Federal Government and sustained into future Administrations," said Congressman John Sarbanes. "A robust telework program will not only improve government operations during a disaster, it could be used as a tool to reduce traffic congestion in the DC area. Telework has a positive impact on productivity, quality of life and the environment. If fully integrated, it can save taxpayers money by increasing efficiency, reducing federal office space and improving employee retention."

"Expanding telework across federal agencies will ensure a more efficient, responsive federal government, especially in times of national security and weather-related emergencies, and will allow the government to use technology to become a better employer," said Subcommittee Chairman Stephen F. Lynch. "Private-sector America has long linked telework to increased job productivity as well as employee morale, so I'm pleased that the telework legislation has passed the House today." "

The passage of our legislation is an important step forward in ensuring that Telework is an essential part of federal personnel policy," said Rep. Connolly (D-VA). "Telework will help recruit and retain federal employees at a time when 47 percent of the federal workforce is eligible to retire in the next decade, maintain continuity of government operations in the event of a terrorist attack or other emergency, and reduce congestion and associated air pollution, particularly in the Washington metropolitan area."

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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